

BALLARD, Michel

Versus: la version réfléchie. Anglais-français. Volume 1. Repérages et paramètres
Montréal: Éditions Ophrys, 2003, 283 p.

Versus: la version réfléchie is the latest book by Michel Ballard, who has previously tackled the didactics of translation and specifically the practical problems of *version*, i.e. translation into the native language (English-French), in various books, for example *La traduction: de l'anglais au français* (Nathan, 1987-94), *Les faux amis* (Ellipses, 1999), *Le nom propre en traduction* (Ophrys, 2001). In the foreword of his new book, Ballard states that the book's aims are down-to-earth. His goal is to make university students and their teachers aware of the main factors that pose translation problems, in order to ease their solution. The approach is contrastive and (for some, perhaps rather too) normative. Ballard points out that the problems of *version* differ from those of *thème*, i.e. translation into a foreign language. In *version*, as opposed to *thème*, a sufficient understanding of the source text is not self-evident, especially at the initial stage of studies, and that is why Ballard devotes all of 51 pages of the first part of the book to the topic of translation as reading (Chapters II and III). The producing of a natural target text in *version* is not unproblematic either (tendencies such as interference are discussed), even though in this case the target language is the mother tongue of the translator. The university course in *version* is a useful exercise both for the mastery of the foreign and of the native language, but it requires attentive thought; *la version doit être réfléchie*, concludes Ballard.

The didactic aims of the book can be seen from its practical form. There are 12 chapters, each of which contains a useful list of further readings on the same subject. All new terms that are introduced to the reader are explained on their first occurrence. The book ends with a bibliography that is divided into two parts (references p. 263-273 and corpus p. 273-278), followed by a fairly

comprehensive subject index (p. 279-283). There is also a list of abbreviations and symbols at the beginning of the book. The presentation of each topic is mostly at a general level and easy to understand. There are plenty of well-chosen examples presented with their context—which is rare. However, they are almost all taken from fiction; this is a drawback since the majority of professional translators deal with non-literary texts... Some subjects are treated more profoundly (language-specific factors in translation, Chapters VIII and IX), some are more sketchy introductions (reported discourse in translation, part 4 in Chapter VI).

Ballard deals with ten major topics that the beginner in translation should take into consideration. In Chapter I (*Aspects de la traduction*), Ballard presents the whole field of translation and the different text types (Delisle, Reiss) that translators deal with. As the text type influences the way translators render their source texts, the student of translation should learn to consider how the text type will influence his/her global translation strategy. In this chapter Ballard also describes the process of translation. According to him, translating has three major, partly overlapping stages: reading, rewriting and the comparison of the source and target texts for the purpose of judging the adequacy of the translation. In his view, the translator must be capable of self-evaluation, of assessing how s/he is rendering the source text and what other solutions there might be.

As said before, the Chapters II (*La traduction comme lecture 1: Les éléments constitutants du sens*) and III (*La traduction comme lecture 2: Les mauvaises lectures*) are dedicated to the problems of reading, and hence understanding the source text. In Chapter II, Ballard mentions different factors that produce and fix the meaning of a text:

the communication situation, the context, extratextual allusions that require general, encyclopaedic or cultural knowledge, semantic and grammatical factors. Here, Ballard takes the reader by the hand, even giving advice concerning the proper way to read the source text or the usage of dictionaries. In Chapter III, he lists several reasons for misunderstanding a foreign text, or creating a false meaning in the target text. Here he includes examples of translation errors taken mainly from the work of anonymous university students. These are followed by a translation—an existing one or Ballard's suggestion—that would render the source text more accurately.

Chapter IV (*Concepts pour la structuration de l'équivalence*) opens with a definition of the unit of translation, a concept that Ballard has been working on for a long time (cf. for example Ballard 1999). The introduction is admirably clear: Ballard shows convincingly that the unit of translation cannot be fixed *a priori* since it is neither a segment of the source text, nor a segment of the target text. It is only by comparing the two texts and by following the logic of the translator—who can be surprisingly creative—that one can define a translation unit of a particular translation. The latter part of the chapter is rather harder to follow. Here Ballard links the unit of translation to the concept of equivalence (according to him, this is the relationship between the source and target segments) and lists two kinds of equivalence (direct and indirect). In the presentation of these kinds of equivalence, he then offers a (non-exhaustive) list of different translation strategies, which is somewhat confusing. All in all, maybe a bit too much subject matter for a short chapter?

Chapter V (*Typographie et ponctuation*) is purely contrastive: Ballard compares the typographical and punctuation systems in French and in English, in order to analyse and predict translation problems. This, and some other parts of the book (especially chapters VII-X), are very useful also for foreign students of the two languages.

Ballard points out that punctuation does not only affect the style but also the meaning of an utterance.

In Chapter VI (*La composante orale en traduction*), Ballard deals with another topic that has interested him before (cf. Ballard 2001): translation problems caused by the orality of written language. Here Ballard's chapter is rather a light introduction to the subject. He mentions some means of iconic language use such as onomatopoeia, giving examples as well as translation suggestions. As he proceeds to the markers of orality in written language he again, albeit rapidly, deals with typography. This feels a bit repetitive right after the previous chapter. However, the examples he gives, showing for example how one can render by a certain kind of word order in French the emphasis expressed by italics in an English source text, are again highly appropriate. Other markers of orality he mentions are the truncating of words and syntactic and stylistic means such as ellipsis and dislocation. After that follows a (too) brief discussion on reported speech and the difficulties it causes in translation. However, Ballard's observations and the advice he gives concerning the translation of the reporting verb are plausible. One can see throughout the book that the writer is very experienced not only in teaching or doing research on translation but also as a translator (it turns out that he has translated English fiction into French). The very last part of the chapter deals with stylistic factors such as euphony and rhythm, and how to avoid awkward turns of phrase in French. Needless to say, this is beneficial for non-French speakers as well.

Chapter VII (*Le paradigme culturel*), deals with cultural factors influencing translation. Since not only languages but also extralinguistic reality differs from one country (or culture) to another, *realia* (which Ballard terms «*désignateurs culturels*») are a frequent cause of translation problems. This chapter contains a lot of valuable practical information that makes the book seem partly like a handbook of translation.

At the same time as Ballard introduces the subjects he deals with, he gives lists of toponyms, historical terms, money units etc. in both languages. This is succeeded by a choice of translation strategies that Ballard finds suitable for rendering culture-bound elements. The second part of the chapter is about translating proper nouns (with useful lists again) and cultural allusions. At the end of the chapter Ballard gives some references for checking culture-bound elements.

Chapters VIII (*La composante idiomatique 1: Énoncés, expressions, syntagmes*) and IX (*La composante idiomatique 2: Les spécificités des langues*), form a whole since they are both about language-specific factors in translation, namely idiomacy. As Ballard puts it, idiomatic forms of language are often translated in an automatic way, by substitution, and the translator only needs to recognize them in order to act accordingly. In Chapter VIII, Ballard enumerates different subtypes of idiomacy such as proverbs, idiomatic expressions, collocations, etc. (with good lists of examples in both languages). In Chapter IX, which seems somewhat brief, he deals with lexis (giving some examples of differences in some semantic fields), morphology (contrasting e.g. verb formation) and syntax in the two languages. Here there are far too many references to the second volume of the book, forthcoming.

The following two chapters, Chapter X (*La composante sociolinguistique: variétés d'anglais et niveaux de langue*) and XI (*Sociolinguistique et communication*) are also partly overlapping since they both are about sociolinguistics. Chapter X is a delightful presentation of different varieties and registers of English. Special attention is given to the differences between American English and British English. Here Ballard's examples are again numerous. The introduction to the different registers of English is also instructive. Translation often causes shifts in register, and these are treated at the end of this chapter. According to Ballard, shifts are sometimes excusable;

there might not be an equivalent for the source-language item in the target system or the context demands the shift. However, some might not find this kind of explanation acceptable, admits Ballard.

Chapter XI returns to some aspects of the orality of language (cf. Chapter VI). In this chapter, Ballard describes the way language depicts the interpersonal relations of speakers. There are indeed differences in the usage of interjections, appellatives, impersonal forms etc., not to mention forms of address (*tu/ vous* vs. «you», or the archaic «thou/ you») in French and in English. As Ballard notes, special attention should be paid to forms of address since they denote different relations (closeness or distance, even impoliteness) according to the circumstances.

The closing chapter, Chapter XII (*La traduction comme contact de langues*), is about the way the source language acts on the target language via translation. The way it does this might be positive (enriching loan words) or negative (interference, false friends). In this chapter Ballard also introduces an interesting concept called *pseudo-emprunt* (pseudo loan). This is an English word integrated into the French vocabulary that has been given a completely new meaning (e.g. *baby foot*, meaning «table football» or *slip* meaning «panties»). These can naturally cause translation problems both in the translation from French to English and from English to French. The chapter ends with a brief typology of translation errors caused by interference.

Versus is a book that the targeted audience will find helpful. University students, as well as their debutant teachers, will certainly benefit from Ballard's error analysis, from his lists of translation strategies and tips concerning the right way to translate e.g. foreign names or idiomatic expressions. For post-graduate students and scholars it serves mainly as a repetition of the familiar. The book is clearly written and it reads nicely, thanks to the already mentioned multiplicity of examples and some nice

touches of humour. The only weak spot in this general reader-friendliness is the somewhat confusing layout of some parts of the book: lack of consistency in the usage of e.g. bold-face, missing page numbers and names, repetitiveness, overlaps and multiple references to Volume II, forthcoming. In spite of these minor errors, I would recommend

Versus to be used as a textbook especially in departments of philology where languages are traditionally taught via didactic translation. This book might help teachers to brush up their teaching methods.

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Cine y traducción

Madrid: Cátedra, 2004, 336 p.

Fins ara, tot el que s'havia escrit sobre traducció audiovisual (TAV) (1) tenia un èmfasi particular (teoria enfront de pràctica, procés enfront de producte, doblatge enfront de subtítulat...) o (2) era massa imprecís en els seus límits amb altres disciplines (estudis literaris, estudis cinematogràfics, estudis culturals...), i li mancava un autèntic enfocament traductològic, o (3) abordava únicament algun problema particular de traducció o (4) abordava problemes generals de traducció amb la pretensió de ser problemes específics, sense un veritable enfocament audiovisual. El llibre de Chaume supera aquesta situació dels estudis de TAV, i hi marca un abans i un després, atès que aquesta obra guarda un extraordinari equilibri i rigor davant aquelles debilitats que marca la producció sobre TAV. Chaume ja no és un especialista d'una modalitat, d'un sol nivell o d'un sol problema, sinó que els maneja tots amb el mestratge del gran especialista, coneix a fons absolutament tots els plecs i racons de la TAV amb la ciència que deriva de qui és al mateix temps aficionat, entusiasta, professional i estudiós del tema, amb l'autoritat pròpia de qui, a més a més d'estudiós de la traducció, ho és dels estudis cinematogràfics, de la lingüística i de la semiòtica. He participat en un bon nombre de cursos que pretenien transmetre aproximadament el mateix rang de coneixements que els inclosos en aquest llibre; tots aquests cursos han exigit el concurs d'un bon nom-

bre d'especialistes diferents i els continguts dels cursos no han sigut de cap manera tan harmònics ni tan eficaços com el llibre que ressenye.

Chaume no es limita a fer seus els coneixements dels altres; els dona un marc comú, els homogeneïtza i a, més a més, aporta personalment una bona part d'aquests coneixements. Els autors que constitueixen les seues fonts estan curosament elegits, com només es pot fer quan es coneixen en profunditat absolutament tots ells, i en el llibre ofereix detalls que no són habituals, com poden ser la justíssima i necessària revindiació de l'obra de Natàlia Izard o el recurs a algunes aportacions de Tino Martín.

Chaume ha fugit sempre del sectarisme i del reduccionisme teòrics; no descarta cap aportació teòrica que pugui ser útil per al seu objecte d'estudi: el seu enfocament és necessàriament multidisciplinari, integrador i eclèctic. El seu sentit comú li permet escapar de totes les trampes que aguaiten a l'estudiós de la TAV (descripcions teòriques no directament aplicables a la TAV; informació i explicacions massa òbvies per banals o per ja conegudes; falta de relació entre els supòsits teòrics i l'estudi empíric; dicotomia estèril entre doblatge i subtítulat; explicació de la imposició del doblatge amb arguments merament polítics; debat estèril sobre el que és i el que deixa de ser comunicació i traducció audiovisual partint d'una definició establida; falta d'especificitat dels